

AN
ADDRESS
ON THE
PAST, PRESENT,
AND
EVENTUAL RELATIONS
OF THE
UNITED STATES
TO
FRANCE.

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1803.

ADDRESS
OF THE
PRESIDENT AND CONGRESS
TO THE
PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES,

BELOVED FELLOW-CITIZENS,

THE present situation of public affairs appears, in our opinion, so threatening to your welfare, that we think it our indispensable duty to make this address.

When we reflect upon events that have occurred in our days, to us so highly important, the solemn review naturally tends to revive the impression of principles that heretofore have been so salutary, and at this time claim our best consideration.

Constituted, as we are, your servants, by our counsels and measures to promote, as much as we can, your prosperity, we will endeavour to discharge the sacred

obligation, with a singleness of heart aiming at the sole object of your good.

For this purpose we mean to speak freely; but truth shall be our guide.

Seeing you embarked in the same interests, involved in the same dangers, and knowing the virtues which you in common possess, our minds revolt from every idea of *party*. In you we recognize our dear COUNTRY, and our souls embrace you all with undistinguishing affection.

Some years ago, summoned by a voice which freemen are always bound to obey, we lifted up our young and untaught hands in a dreadful contest. Aided by a great and generous nation, we, under providential auspices, prevailed; and, at the end of the controversy, sat down in full possession of all we had asked for at its beginning—*Peace, Liberty, and Safety*.

A revolution in our affections attended our political revolution. After the sword was sheathed we still regarded *Britons* as unfriendly. *Frenchmen* succeeded to all that love which had been for ages confined to their rivals.

We now anticipated with delight those

scenes that, in grateful succession, should, by a reciprocation of blessings, render us still more and more dear one to another. We anxiously desired to introduce the products and manufactures of *France*, the samples we had received being exceedingly pleasing to us, and to transfer to her all the benefits which *Britain* had been accustomed to gain from our commerce.

We calculated that the consumption by every citizen of these States would contribute to maintain one of our esteemed allies; and we hoped that this new and incessantly increasing demand would operate powerfully in meliorating the condition of those classes among them, who, by the pressure of the ancient regimen, were reduced to the deepest distress.

Difficulties arose from the defects of our first Confederation. These were removed by amendments. Other difficulties arose from the fixed habits of mercantile intercourse on one side, and the novelty of such connections on the other side. But all these would have been soon dispersed by the genial influences of mutual esteem, and an intercommunity of interests,

Before these benign principles were allowed to yield their ripened fruits, *France* resolved to relieve herself from oppressions that were insupportable.

We beheld her exertions for this purpose with transports of joy.

While, in the course of this arduous struggle, every nerve was strained for defence, the conduct of our government did not correspond with the feelings and the wishes of the citizens of these States. Measures were adopted that had a tendency to alienate the kindly dispositions of *France* towards us, and to extinguish the truly fraternal sentiments that so happily united the two nations.

Instead of contemplating *the nature of the contest*, and estimating the inevitable consequences of the decision to *ourselves*, more especially if that decision should be unfavourable to *France*; or, in other words, instead of viewing in a national light the agitation that shook the world, a concussion which, by its continuance and fury, plainly announced a new order of things to take place upon this globe, and steadily regarding its *final result*, our government,

with a short-sighted policy ever to be lamented, turned their thoughts to the inferior, precarious and temporary profits of a trade to be derived from the calamities of other nations.

This original error was followed by many others of the same kind. The character of our country was likely to be committed.

To be brief, the general management of your affairs was so displeasing to you, that, about two years ago, you made great changes of your principal officers, and clearly manifested by your elections, that aversion to *France* was not a recommendation to your confidence.

Extraordinary events have lately happened in that country; and, among the various opinions here maintained concerning them, some have been expressed with a very improper vehemence.

To infer that the people of *France* are fools and slaves, because they are attached to their present government, is to betray an unfounded and unjust contempt for the understanding and spirit of that enlightened and gallant nation.

Their government, as now exercised, seems to have sprung from contingences, operating with such force as to exempt the actors from a charge of treason. The alteration was a splendid violence, impelled by necessity, and expiated by its effects. It was the resuscitation of an expiring State.

France, however ardent her love of liberty, may not, perhaps, be yet prepared for a government of the best form.

In days of old, a Nation, chosen and set apart by Heavenly Wisdom for most gracious purposes, was kept forty years wandering in a wilderness; and, until purified from the corruptions of former *bondage*, was not permitted to enter into *the Promised Land*.

But however defective their civil institutions may be, the *French* have, at length, triumphed over all their enemies, and have finished the war which had raged so long, with an aggrandizement unknown in *Europe* for a thousand years. Their leaders displayed such traits of genius, magnanimity, generosity and benevolence, that there was reason to believe that having always present to them the revered

images of Liberty and Humanity, as they had been the successful vindicators of their own rights, so they would become benefactors to their fellow creatures of mankind; and, discovering that true glory can only be attained by *good done to others*, would found their fair fame upon that immoveable basis, to be celebrated on earth, as long as it shall be inhabited, by the unanimous applauses of sympathizing posterity, and eternally rewarded in Heaven for a right use of the talents committed to their management.

BELOVED FELLOW-CITIZENS,

It has now become our painful office to declare, that these pleasing hopes have vanished. The virtues appear to be prescribed by ambition. A gigantic Power seems animated by the devastating spirit of conquest, and glares with a fierce aspect on all around.

The direful traffic in human flesh is decreed. *Spain*, northern *Italy*, *Batavia*, and the adjacent members of *Germany*, are, under different names, reduced to provinces. *Switzerland* is subjugated. *Louisiana* is acquired. The imperious sentence, "FOR

"SUCH IS OUR PLEASURE," is becoming the sole law of the world.

Some of you must remember our dreadful situation about fifty years ago, when *France* possessed the country lately ceded to her by *Spain*. The same claims, the same calamities are to be repeated. If she shall prove more successful than formerly, then, to ensure the work of destruction, the *Roman* maxim will be adopted. A surrender of your arms will be demanded.

The execution of another maxim of *Roman* policy will follow. Your young men and your sailors will be compelled to serve in armies and on board fleets, in distant regions and untried climes, wherever the ambition and rapacity of their masters may destine them to bleed and perish; while large bodies of foreign soldiers will be stationed among you, to extort taxes from you, and to awe you into submission under every injury and every insult. Those already suffered by other nations are too horrible to be recapitulated; and it would be madness in you to look for milder miseries.

When the chains that prevent resistance

shall be thus rivetted upon you, to consummate your woes, *religious establishments*, violating the rights of conscience, and soul-racking *definitions of heresy*, are to be expected; so that the generations of your posterity, condemned to an ignorance of the holy truths which, with divine energy, demonstrate the intimate relationship between piety, virtue, liberty and happiness, may the more readily be reconciled to the inheritance of wretchedness which you are to leave them.

Such prospects opening themselves to our view, we should deem ourselves criminal indeed, if we did not forthwith communicate to you our apprehensions.

Whether these apprehensions are just or not, your wisdom is to decide. It is your own business. If they are to you in any manner alarming, you ought immediately, without losing a moment, to put yourselves upon your guard; always remembering that expensive safety is better than cheap danger.

In determining the conduct to be pursued by us, we must not too much rely on a notion that we could successfully resist

all the power of *France*. When we recollect the superiority of her naval force to our own, her numerous armies, her capacity to attack us in any place, and at any time she pleases, and that, with a few ships, she could block up the mouths of our navigable rivers; surely it would be unwise to draw her whole force into action against us alone, when, by a prudent delay, a great part of it may be otherwise engaged.

To us it is evident that our first step should be to negotiate. It is our ardent wish to preserve a perpetual amity with *France*; and the people of these States have demonstrated, by their late elections, that they heartily join in this wish. As those among us who have shown a hostile temper towards her are not now in possession of power, let us try to convince her that our dispositions are all that a just nation could desire them to be.

It is our anxiety that a harmony with her may never be interrupted, which causes us to deprecate her taking the position that has been mentioned. It is indubitable that the execution of the plan will generate

disputes, which will inevitably bring on a war.

Well known as it is, how dear a late sovereign of *France* rendered himself to these States, by declining any territorial acquisitions on this continent, and of how little consequence *Louisiana* must now be to her, except for obtaining an influence upon us, the impartial world will probably regard the act of taking possession as a commencement of hostilities.

Such an opinion will be just.

When we consider the ascendancy which *France* has acquired over *Spain*, we think that the territories of the latter on this continent may, with propriety of language, be said to belong to the former; and when we consider, also, how unimportant *Louisiana* must be *of itself* to *France*, we cannot entertain the least doubt but that the *French* government means to acquire the dominion of ALL AMERICA, and that the possession of *Louisiana* is to be the first act of the tragedy.

If this business cannot be satisfactorily terminated by negociation, and if it would be rash in us, by ourselves, to enter into a

war with *France*, we ought to form the best agreements we can with other nations, for putting some limits to the domination of that country. Her safety, freedom and prosperity are, as they constantly have been, precious to us; but we should consider ourselves as enemies to mankind, if we could be pleased with her attainment of a power that would enable her to tyrannize over other nations.

On turning our attention to those nations, circumstances are brought before us of incalculable moment.

Britain beholds a power, strengthening and fostered by peace, that threatens, at no distant period, a more tremendous war than any in which she was ever engaged—a war that will strike directly at her existence as a free people.

For a century and a half past, every eminent statesman, of every party, in that kingdom, has pronounced, that *any considerable* addition to *France*, in the *Netherlands*, would be fatal to the welfare of *Britain*. *France* now has the *whole Netherlands*.

If she is able to subdue these States, and shall be allowed, by doing so, to in-

crease her already formidable power, the conquest of *Britain* follows of course. *Her* fate once decided, every monarch in *Europe* must resign his crown, or be degraded into a tributary dependant. An universal bankruptcy will take place among the conquered, while the conquerors revel in riches, which prodigality itself scarcely can dissipate. There is no calculation to be made of the resources of plunderers.

The conquest of one country leads to the conquest of another. The rage for obtaining wealth by pillage is never sated. It grows, by being constantly fed, to a height altogether monstrous. Every conquest adds not only a new strength, but a new appetite to the devouring power.

The example lately exhibited will be fascinating to daring, needy adventurers. It will encourage them, by bringing to their recollection the ancient and modern instances where the General has started up a new Prince, his officers a new nobility.

The question is not now about the establishment of *Republics*, but of *Dynasties*.

Of all the *European* sovereignties, *Russia* seems to be the least exposed to such a re-

volution: yet, in reality, there is none more exposed. It is but to recollect how, about thirty years ago, an illiterate barbarian made her imperial throne to totter, and to review some other events, together with their internal and external bearings, to perceive that this assertion is strictly correct.

The welfare of the reigning family, and the true interest of the empire, invite to the most cordial connection with ancient governments, especially with *Britain* and *Austria*. Every other political project has no defined objects, no grounds ultimately to rest upon. They are full of snares and dangers.

In time, even *Prussia* will discover that there is a power in *Europe* more to be dreaded by her than her usual opponent. If we may be allowed to judge, she is playing for straws with dice of diamonds. The period for these inglorious quarrels is past. Should they be renewed, their neighbours will interfere to compose them, and with effect. But where is protection to be sought for against that enormous mass of power that casts such a dark shade upon so many nations?

There is no trust to be placed in those whose thirst of empire disdains all limits. It was the practice of the ancient *Romans* to adorn those monarchs whose territories they designed to appropriate to themselves, with the title of “*friends to the senate and people of Rome.*” The insidious title lulled those princes into a false security, while ruin was surrounding them. At last they and their families felt that “*friendship*” with *Rome* was only another name for *destruction*.

The æra is arrived when no nation can be safe that stands by itself. There must be an union, cemented by noble sentiments and generous resolutions. The state of affairs loudly calls them to the practice of virtues, which a false policy has too long banished from their councils. Contracted and dissociating axioms must be abandoned. They have never fully comprehended the multitude of blessings which one nation derives from the happiness of others.

With common consent a system must be devised and adopted, that will faithfully aim at the welfare of ALL. Such an union

will arrest the career of *France* on the *European* continent.

It ought always to be remembered that it was the want of such an union between that potent monarch, PHILIP, king of *Macedonia*, ANTIOCHUS, the king of *Syria*, and the strong republics of *Greece* and *Carthage*, that afforded the *Romans* opportunities of conquering them all, one after another. Had they resisted in concert, they would have been safe; but they chose to be indolent spectators of combats, in the issue of which they were as much interested as those actually engaged. From this astonishing infatuation they never recovered till it was too late. Their imprudence deprived mankind of their last hope, gave the empire of the world to the ever restless *Romans*, and consigned its nations to centuries of slavery.

The renewal, by France, of the *Family Compact* with *Spain*, though upon conditions humiliating to the latter, points out to us the benefits of a countervailing compact, dignified by worthier motives, and directed to more laudable ends.

If things come to extremities, let *Britain*

open to us the unshackled commerce of all her dominions in every quarter of the globe; and the spring we shall give to her manufactures, and the additions we shall make to her force, will produce an increase of wealth and stability which it is impossible for her in any other manner to obtain: but, in the first place, let her for ever abolish the *African* slave-trade, that enormous sin, which, persevered in by national authority, against conviction of its abominations, and in defiance of the clearest light that ever shone upon a people, menaces to sink her into perdition.

All impediments being removed, and a confederacy framed, of which the objects shall be uniformly justifiable, a conjunction of the naval powers of *Britain* and *these States* may, in a short time, seize every island held by *France* and her associates. It may do more * * * * *

These thoughts are not the suggestions of imagination or resentment: they arise from facts. A knowledge of the number of our seamen, and of their character, dictates them.

If, in former wars, when fighting for

objects comparatively unimportant, our sailors displayed heroic courage and nautical skill, which excited the admiration of the world, what may not be expected from their prowess, when fighting for the liberties of their country, the preservation of their aged parents, their faithful wives, their helpless children, their affectionate relatives, friends and fellow-citizens, from injuries, insults and miseries more terrible than the pangs of death?

Many words are needless. You are sensible that, in such a war as is alluded to, every thing that can be dear to you will be at stake. We will only add, that our confidence in your understanding to appreciate them, and in your resolution to maintain them, is unbounded. Farewell.

ANTICIPATION.